

## **Position Description Format for General Schedule Positions (GS)**

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### **A. Introduction**

Define the unit where the position is located by name and geographical location, and provide a brief statement of the unit's mission. Also summarize the purpose of the position.

### **B. Major Duties**

Give an overall view of the position and list all major duties which are regular and recurring. The order in which major duties are described may vary. It is preferred that major duties be listed in the order of their importance; however, they may be listed in the sequence in which they occur—day by day, over a longer period of time, or during an entire cycle. Include percentages of time spent on major duties involving distinctly different kinds or levels of work (for example, clerical duties and inspection duties might be different kinds of work assigned to one employee).

### **C. Evaluation Factors**

#### **FACTOR 1: KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION**

This factor answers two questions:

- what kind and level of knowledge and skills are needed; and
- how are they used in doing the work.

Under FES, the knowledge factor includes information or facts the employee must know to do the work. Sometimes a description of a skill requirement, which is generally observable, will be more

precise. Show only the knowledge and skills essential for full performance of the work.

Generally four or five statements are enough.

Do not describe educational, licensure, certification requirements, or degrees of proficiency unless these requirements can be validated. Include special knowledge or skill requirements that are essential to successful performance and would be used as selective factors for recruitment. (Supervisors and human resources specialists can help determine these requirements.) Factor 1 does not credit personal characteristics, such as patience or creativity; they are considered inherently in other factors. The following are brief examples of statements appropriate for this factor.

- Professional knowledge of civil engineering to design flood control structures;
- Knowledge of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation to correct obvious errors in draft material;
- Competitive level typing skill to produce documents on a personal computer using word processing software; or
- Skill in conversational Spanish to interview witnesses.

## **FACTOR 2: SUPERVISORY CONTROLS**

This factor includes:

- how the work is assigned;
- what the employee's responsibility is for carrying out the work; and
- how the work is reviewed.

The first subfactor considers how the supervisor defines assignments to the employee. For example, a supervisor might assign work with detailed instructions on how to do the work; instructions only for new, difficult, or unusual aspects of the work; suggestions for procedures to follow; or only information about the objectives, priorities, and deadlines.

The employee's responsibility measures the degree of independence the employee has in making decisions. For example: an employee might work exactly as instructed; refer situations not covered by instructions to the supervisor; or handle all work independently according to established policies and accepted practices.

The nature and extent of review of positions range from close and detailed, to spot check, to general review. Note that it is not just the degree of independence that is evaluated, but also the degree to which the nature of the work allows the employee to make decisions and commitments and to exercise judgment. For example, many clerical employees perform their work with considerable independence

and receive very general review. This work is evaluated, however, at the lower levels of this factor because there is limited opportunity to exercise judgment and initiative.

The following illustrate how this factor could appear in a position description.

- The supervisor assigns work, advises on changes in procedures, and is available for assistance when required.

Routine work is performed independently following set procedures. The work is reviewed for accuracy through spot checks, through complaints from customers, and through observation of the employee at work.

- The supervisor assigns work in terms of project objectives and basic priorities and is available for consultation in resolving controversial issues.

The employee independently plans and carries out the projects and selects the approaches and methods to be used in solving problems.

Completed projects are reviewed to determine that objectives have been met and are in compliance with agency policies and regulations.

### **FACTOR 3: GUIDELINES**

This factor has two subfactors:

- the kind of guidelines used in doing the work; and
- how much judgment is needed to use them.

The first subfactor addresses the guides themselves. Employees may use guides, such as desk manuals, agency regulations, standard operating procedures, handbooks, policies, and precedents. It is not necessary to list every specific guideline used or to list a guide by its actual name. For example, "agency regulations covering voucher processing" is far more meaningful than "XYZ Regulation 3210."

Specific instructions, procedures, and policies may limit the opportunity to interpret or adapt the guidelines. On the other hand, the absence of directly applicable guidelines may require the employee to use considerable judgment in adapting current or developing new guidance.

The following are brief examples of descriptions for this factor.

- Written and oral guides provide specific instructions for doing the work.

Most of these instructions are easily memorized and require little interpretation. When instructions do not apply, the problem is referred to the supervisor.

- Guidelines include agency regulations and directives, manufacturers' catalogs and handbooks, precedents, and files of previous projects.

These guidelines are generally applicable, but the employee makes adaptations in dealing with problems and unusual situations.

## **FACTOR 4: COMPLEXITY**

The three parts of this factor consider:

- the nature of the assignment;
- what the employee considers when deciding what must be done; and
- how difficult and original are the employee's actions or responses.

It is important to study the applicable FES standard before describing this factor because the kind of information needed differs from occupation to occupation.

Characterize the work in terms of the nature and variety of the tasks, methods, functions, projects, or programs carried out. This factor level should illustrate how the employee applies the knowledge and skills described in Factor 1.

Some employees have little or no choice about how to perform the work. Others may have to develop, analyze, or evaluate information before the work can progress. The level of difficulty in carrying out the work varies depending on whether the facts or conditions are clear-cut and apply directly to the problem or issue; vary according to the nature of the subject matter, phase, or problem handled; or involve unusual circumstances and incomplete or conflicting data.

In some situations the work is mastered easily, and the employee takes the obvious course of action. The level of difficulty and originality increases as the employee considers differences in courses of action and refines methods or develops new techniques, concepts, theories, or programs to solve problems.

The following examples show how descriptions for this factor level can differ depending on the occupation.

Mail Clerk -

- The assignment involves opening, sorting, and routing mail by general subject matter to approximately 150 delivery points and by specialized subject matter to 70 or 80 points.

The employee examines the content of a variety of materials to identify and associate subject matter with closely related technical units.

The employee determines proper routing or other action to take.

Engineer -

- Projects involve developing designs, plans, and specifications for a variety of utility systems for multistory buildings.

The engineer considers factors, such as unusual local conditions, increased emphasis on energy conservation, and the relationship of problems and practices related to engineering fields.

In making decisions the employee is often required to depart from past approaches and to extend traditional techniques or develop new ones to meet major objectives without compromising design and engineering principles.

## **FACTOR 5: SCOPE AND EFFECT**

This factor includes:

- the purpose of the work; and
- the impact of the work product.

The first subfactor states the objective to be achieved. This may involve the conclusions reached and decisions or recommendations made; treatment or service provided; results of tests or research performed; or approvals or denials made. Do not confuse this subfactor with Factor 4, Complexity. Factor 4 deals with how the work is done to fulfill the purpose described in Factor 5.

The impact of the work product or service identifies who or what benefits from the employee's work and how this benefit is realized. Consider only the effect of properly performed work. When "responsibility for accuracy" is critical in a position, it should be reflected in the complexity involved and the special knowledge required.

The examples below show how to describe this factor for different kinds of work.

File Clerk -

- The purpose of the work is to maintain control and reference files for incoming correspondence.

The work contributes to the efficiency of daily operations of the organization.

Engineer -

- The purpose of the work is to provide technical expertise in the design of....

This work affects the quality of designs of mechanical systems aboard floating plants and equipment used in dredging activities throughout the agency nationwide.

#### **FACTOR 6: PERSONAL CONTACTS**

This is a one part factor covering the people contacted and the conditions under which the contacts take place. Creditable contacts are those made both face-to-face and by telephone. Describe contacts in terms of the work relationship, unusual circumstances in arranging the exchange, problems in identifying the role or authority of those taking part, or use of different ground rules in different situations. Do not include contacts with supervisors in this factor; they are credited under Factor 2.

#### **FACTOR 7: PURPOSE OF CONTACTS**

This one part factor explains the purpose of the contacts described in Factor 6. This factor can be described by the following examples: to give or exchange information; to resolve problems; to provide service; to motivate, influence, or interrogate persons; or to justify, defend, negotiate, or settle matters. As appropriate, information that could affect the nature of the contacts can be covered. This might include, for example, dealing with people who are skeptical, uncooperative, unreceptive, or hostile; or, settling controversial issues or arriving at compromise solutions with people who have different viewpoints, goals, or objectives. Factors 6 and 7 presume that the same contacts will be evaluated for both factors. Therefore, use the same personal contacts that serve as the basis for the level selected for Factor 7 when selecting a level for Factor 6.

#### **FACTOR 8: PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

This one part factor describes the nature of physical demands placed on the employee. Efforts such as climbing, lifting, stooping, and reaching can be important. The factor level should state how often and how intense the activity is and should include any physical characteristics or special abilities needed, such as specific agility or dexterity requirements. This factor relates to the application of the knowledge and skills mentioned in Factor 1.

#### **FACTOR 9: WORK ENVIRONMENT**

This one part factor describes the physical surroundings in which the employee works and any special safety regulations or precautions that the employee must observe to avoid mishaps or discomfort. It is not necessary to describe normal everyday safety precautions, such as use of safe work practices in an office or observance of fire regulations and traffic signals. This factor relates to the application of the knowledge and skills mentioned in Factor 1.

## **EEO Responsibility - Incorporate into supervisory position descriptions:**

The following statement must be incorporated into the position description of supervisors and managers:

Assures equal opportunity is extended to all employees supervised which includes full consideration of eligible minority group members and women in filling vacant positions; holding individual and group meetings to communicate equal opportunity and program missions; providing career counseling and orientation; enhancing career opportunities through training and development, job redesign, and similar techniques; and ensuring full equal consideration of these employees in recommending promotions, awards, and other forms of special recognition.

**Supervision Given:** If the incumbent supervises others, the description must:

1. Identify the positions supervised.
2. Describe the scope and degree of the supervisor's responsibility for work planning and organization, work assignment and review, and for administrative functions.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS (Check if applicable)

- ☐ Supervisory Responsibilities (EEO Statement)
- ☐ Training Activities - Career Intern, Student Career Experience Program
- ☐ Motor Vehicle or Commercial Driver's License Required
- ☐ Pesticide Applicators License Required
- ☐ Safety/Radiological Safety Collateral Duties
- ☐ EEO Collateral Duties
- ☐ Drug Test Required
- ☐ Vaccine(s) Required
- ☐ Financial Disclosure Required
- ☐ Special Physical Requirements/Demands
- ☐ Position is located at a Biocontainment Facility
- ☐ incumbent escorts visitors in the laboratory area and/or works with high consequence pathogens

Other: